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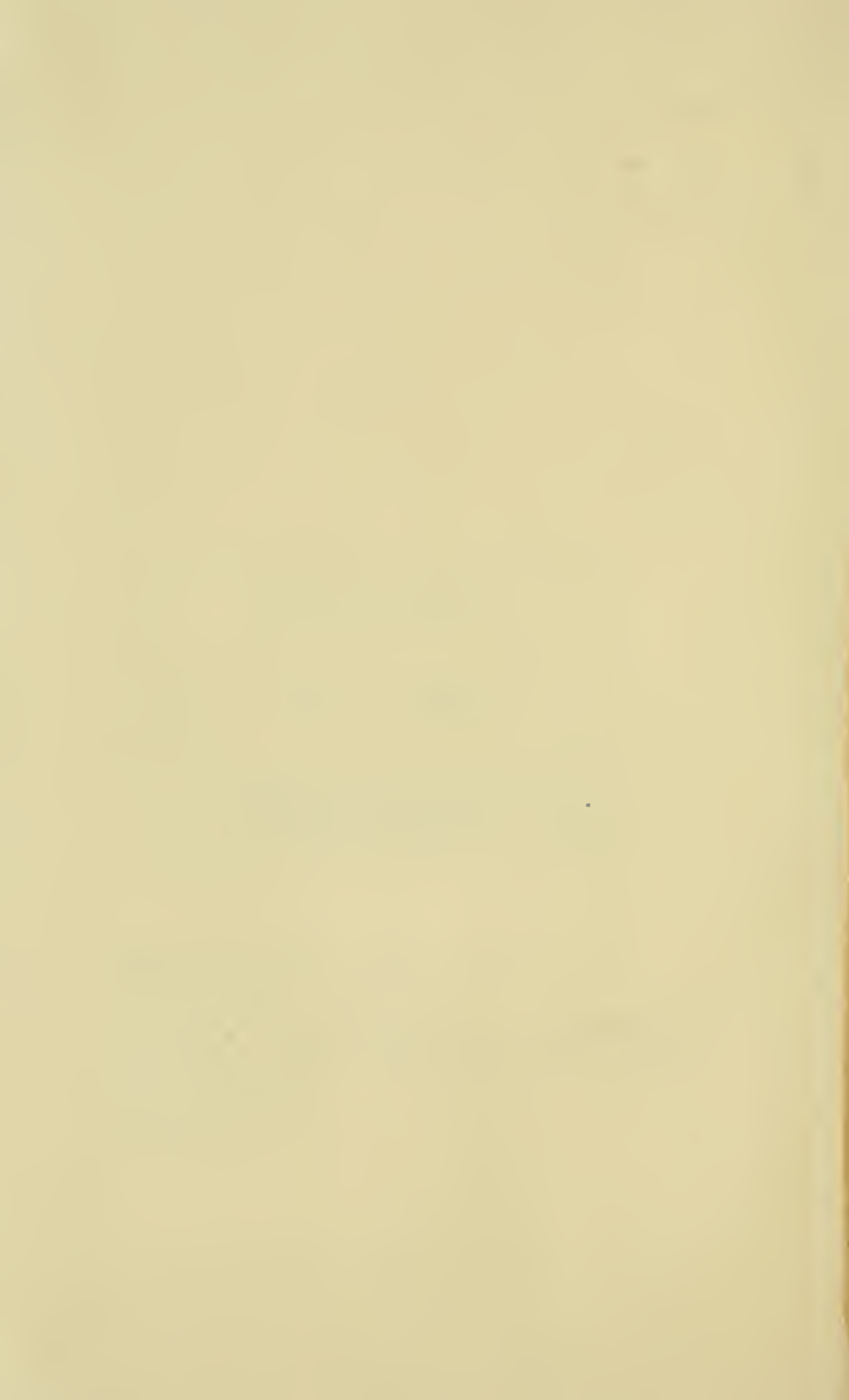
THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

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Rossiter, S. B.

Curler's sermons : preached  
before the Grand national  
curling  
club /





# CURLER'S SERMONS

PREACHED BEFORE THE  
GRAND NATIONAL CURLING CLUB

BY THE CHAPLAIN  
REV. S. B. ROSSITER, D.D.

AT THE  
NORTH PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH  
Cor. Ninth Ave. and 31st St., N. Y. City

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# Christianity and Curling

I Cor. ix: 25

January 21st, 1894



## Christianity and Curling.

“And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do *it* to obtain a corruptible crown, but we an incorruptible.”—  
I Cor. ix: 25.

Read—

I Cor. ix: 24-27.

Phil. iii: 13, 14.

II Tim. iv: 7, 8.

Heb. xii: 1.

I have read these passages in your hearing to show that the Apostle Paul used the athletic games, popular in his day, to illustrate things vital in the Christian experience. Is not this example of the apostle's a sufficient warrant for me to use, as the Holy Spirit shall dictate, a popular athletic game of our day to illustrate the same theme? For that reason I have chosen as the subject of my discourse this morning “Christianity and Curling,” the athletic game popular among you, and one more free from objectionable features than any other athletic game played on green fields or keen ice.

Let me remind you then, in the first place, that *Life is a contest*. We are born into a world of combatant interests. Good and evil are striving for the mastery, and sooner or later we range ourselves with one party or the other. Even growth is a struggle of our vitality against noxious influences and unwholesome conditions. Business is a competition; livelihood is a stern fight to dig our food out of a hard soil, or to wrest it from the hands of men loth to give up a part of their surplusage.

Public position has to be achieved by strength of character, ability and work. There is plenty of room at the top, but how few succeed in getting to the top; and the lower walks are crowded with an eager, jostling multitude, and it seems, sometimes, as though life were the mad desire of everyone to get upon the shoulders of some one else.

And it is not to be forgotten that we live this life, and fight this battle, surrounded by an atmosphere of cloud and mystery. The

*sense of need* of some divine help and guidance is very strong. Conscience strikes like an alarm bell in the soul. Reason peers anxiously into the great unknown to distinguish any guiding lights. A fearful dread of falling into naught, in every human heart, is older than the old stoic who first confessed it, and yet what traveller has ever returned from the undiscovered country to tell us of its secrets.

If life be compared to a race, we run with uncertainty of the goal and the reward, unless some clear voice out of the eternities speak of the crown and the applause.

We fight our battle with inward apprehension, which of itself contributes to our weakness, unless some clear voice promises aid and victory.

We fling our curling stone into the fog unless we hear some authoritative voice speaking from the Heavenly Tee, Come this way. Ah! no greater mistake can a man make than attempt to live this earthly life, run this earthly race, fight this earthly

battle, play with all the ardor and enthusiasm of his nature his life game, and seek not to fortify his soul with well grounded convictions of immortality, train his eye to see, far off, the flashing battlements of the New Jerusalem; train his ear to hear the calling of the clear voice that is always speaking to men; and keep his heart fixed upon the thought of lying at last within the great circles of glory, and as near as possible to the Home Tee.

Brethren and friends, a man's life without Jesus Christ is like a branch severed from the vine trying to support itself by drawing nourishment from itself; it is like a ship sailing unknown seas, without chart or compass, taking its direction from the waves that curl their white crests at the bow; and is like a curling stone flung anywhere, and shooting zig zag over a wide field of ice.

I pray you remember, in your work, in your contests, and your lawful ambitions, the words of the Lord Jesus, Apart from Me, ye can do nothing.

Let me remind you, in the second place, of the men who fail, or in the language of your game, the men who hog, for not to get three-quarters way across the field I construe to be a failure.

I sympathize with the men who make a failure out of life, and there are thousands of them in this city this morning, and tens of thousands of them over all this broad land ! Men who cannot get along somehow; who have no luck, or luck is against them; who fight a hopeless battle; who do the best they can, and yet are sinking in the social scale; something adverse is always happening; burdened with constitutions not sufficiently vitalized, cursed with uncontrollable appetites; given a too pliant disposition; good-hearted, but weak-minded, or what is worse, weak-willed; who shall say that these men are not more sinned against than sinning; who shall say their disadvantages are not greater than their advantages; who shall say that in some way they are not the descendants of Cain, who in an awful hour of self-consciousness,

cried, My burden is greater than I can bear.

Do you ask me why men fail in the game on ice? Because of indifference for one thing; because of miscalculation of force necessary to reach the goal for another thing; because of bad aim; because of a slip at the start; because they do not receive the help they need from brother men.

And is it not so in that larger, more important contest, of which, your game for the nonce, is an illustration?

The man who thinks life is a holiday, who unfortunately is heir of great wealth, and lives on the impetus his father gave him, and expects to reach the end of life without putting forth any effort of his own; or the man who allows himself to treat all things as a huge joke, and never bulges his muscle, and fills his lungs, and nerves his heart, and takes hold with both hands upon some wrong that needs to be righted, or some good that needs to be advanced, will never reach the middle line; will lie in the way of others, and



when, at the day's close, the players are going home, with besoms over their shoulders, exultant and triumphant, they will lie neglected and solitary on the desolate ice.

So, too, many a man miscalculates the distance between here and Heaven; forgets that friction accompanies every running stone, that it increases in progressive ratio as motion is slowed down; forgets that the tendency of things is to glue a man to the present perishable world; forgets, especially, that in the great game of which we are now speaking, the whole man must be put into the effort, as Paul says, body, soul and spirit.

So, too, many a man aims wrong at the start, does not run his eye along the central line of righteousness and keep well in view the golden circles around the Tee. Many a man aims at character as salvation, or at the supposed kindly judgment of God as salvation; you might as well aim your channel stone at Wee Willie standing over there at the right, or at Sandy Ne'er-do-weel standing over their on the left, and hope to reach the

Tee, right *straight in front* and far away, as to hope to reach the Great Goal of perfect salvation in any other way than aiming straight at Him, who said, "Come unto Me!" "Believe on Me!" "Ye shall have eternal life."

So, too, many a man makes a slip at the start. His feet are not well planted at the beginning; some feebleness of muscle, some obstacle at the start, some perfectly unexplicable thing, causes him to stumble. He loses his throw, misdirects the energy of his life, and no after effort can retrieve the mistake.

Oh! that is one of the awful things about our present life, that we cannot overtake the consequences of an act and smother them. For an act of yours is very much like a stone that has left the hand, it can not be taken back, it can not be redirected; on it glides for weal or woe till it finds its resting place.

Where is the resting place of consequences? Did you ever inquire? Your stone will come to a stand still, but when and where will consequences come to a stand still?

Where? but in the bosom of Jesus Christ, who bore our sins in His own body on the tree.

Thank God, you, who had praying fathers and mothers, for that, I understand, is getting your feet well planted at the start. Thank God, you, who had Christian training; the Psalms of David, the catechism and church-going habits, and reverence for God's day and God's word, for that, I understand, is looking straight ahead. Thank God, you, who to your own life powers have added the power of Jesus, for that, I understand, is to give your whole energy, in strength lines, right for the Tee. Thank God, you who have found Christ to be a sin atoning Saviour and are able to say,

The mistakes of my life have been many,  
The sins of my heart have been more;  
But I cast myself upon Jesus,  
And trust in His saving Power.

And many men fail because they do not get the help they need from brother men. I want to linger here a moment on the need of

brotherly helpfulness. Your game of curling furnishes a most beautiful and instructive illustration of helpfulness. Your sweeping department is surely a department of helpfulness.

And the several rules that govern this department afford us many significant lessons in this direction.

It is a rule of your game that each player come provided with his own besom, or implement of helpfulness. And God has furnished us implements of helpfulness which, if used aright, will make our own life cheerful and other people's glad; but in bad spirit, in selfish, grasping spirit, we have converted them into implements of destruction. God provided you with an open palm, symbol of generosity, friendliness, helpfulness; we have converted it into a closed fist, closing tightly over our money. God gave us a brain to think, to plan, to enlarge, and man's mind is at its best and sweetest when it is thinking and planning for others, but we have converted it into a thought-box, in which we scheme

and plot for our own aggrandizement and others harm. God gave us a double lobed heart, out of which were to flow affections, sympathies, kindnesses, and the heart is healthy and happy when pouring out of its wealth upon others; but we have made it a place of curdled affections, jealousies, envies, and bitterness. I plead with myself and with you all to-day, for right thinking, right heart action, large vision, outstretched arms. Let us use the implements of usefulness furnished us by God in the work for which they were intended and adapted. I plead for kind, Christian, generous words, even to the tramp, and the prodigal, and the beaten one.

I plead for sympathy for the sad, the discouraged, the downhearted. I plead for honest help, such as one man can give another and not make him ashamed of his manhood and his poverty. Now there never was a better opportunity for all manly Christian kindness than in our own city and this dark winter of '93 and '94.

Another rule of your game is that sweep-

ing shall commence after the stone has passed the middle line, or in other words, that helpfulness shall commence when responsibility begins, or when need first shows itself, or when danger begins to threaten. I wish the rule of your game could become the law of life for every one of us, to plant our helpfulness at the point where it is first needed. That is, the point in a man's life that needs especially to be guarded, the moment of first want, first temptation, first declination from the straight path, first gloom of doubt, first heart failure. Care for the homeless boys and girls; for those who, because of humble condition in the home, are handicapped in the race of life; for the youth who are longing for a word of honest counsel, or a foothold in the great business world. Do not hang too long upon the industries of the world, but when you have made your snug sum, give yourself to the amenities and charities of life, and give some one else a chance in the struggle and the reward.

I pray you speak the word of warning to



the young man who is taking his first cup of wine, and is feeling the fascination of gay society and the social folly. Speak right out to your brother man, who needs the shock of your just reproof, or the tonic of your strong commendation. Help a fallen brother rise. Let him lean upon your arm over the hard bit of road. Suffuse the atmosphere with your spirit of helpfulness.

Another rule of your game is, not to improperly speak to, taunt, or interrupt another while in the act of delivering his stone. Oh! these words have an immense significance, using your game as a symbol of true life. Nothing men are so sensitive to as a sneer, a mocking laughter. A man would rather face musketry than that, because, for one thing, a sneer is so hard to meet, and laughter is so hard to check, and a taunt is sharper than a spear thrust; and because, for a second thing, you have to lower your own manhood to meet it on its own debased field.

I have seen sweet, innocent, simple-minded righteousness killed as by a stab, because of

a laugh or a jeer. Peter was led to deny his Lord because of the laugh of a servant girl.

Men are kept from confession of faith in Christ because they dread the ridicule of their old-time boon companions. Let a man deliver his stone as best he can; do not distract his mind, or shake his nerve by shout or interruption. He is playing for eternity, and a little trembling of the nerve at the moment of the stone separating from the hand, will cause him to miss the glorious circles around the Home Tee. Oh! I tell you words are things; a laugh that seems to be but a little shiver of the air, is lead weight when it strikes the heart; a taunt that seems but a keen glance of wit, is a stiletto when it reaches the heart. Oh! of all things in your care, you need watchfully and kindly to use your power of words.

Another of your rules is, no sweepings to be moved forward and left in front of a running stone, so as to stop, or obstruct its course. Oftentims the best way to help a man is not to hinder him. Let him run; he



is honest, he is ambitious, his head is up, he is working hard, he is getting ahead of you, who are working just as hard as he, but somehow he is gaining on you. Do not envy him, cheer him. Do not shake your head and say: Ah, I could if I would; and thus fill the air with surmizes. Protect the reputation of men, for reputation is the immediate jewel of a man's soul. Rejoice in a brother's success. Let his success be a stimulus to you for new and greater endeavor. Put no obstacles in the way of a brother. Do not hinder. Do not impede. You are not greater because you stop him, but smaller. Life is crowded, but there is room for us. Give me the charity of the 13th of Cor., and though my home be a cabin, and my food the bare necessaries of life, I can have sweet content and the blessing of God. Oh! may God give us all this large, royal, free-handed helpfulness. Let my own soul be the forfeit, if I intentionally hinder a man from reaching the Heavenly Tee.

Let me remind you, as a last thought, there

is the great adjudication. The game has an end. The contest draws to a close. The moment comes when there is the last throw, the last heart beat, the last word, the last act, and you and I pass to hear the verdict upon our life's course. We all must stand at the judgment seat of Christ to give an account of the deeds done in the body.

I would not strain analogy, but is not this rule of your game at least suggestive as to where you shall lie in regard to the goal. All measurement is to be taken from the centre of the Tee, to the part of the stone that is nearest to it. There are two parts to that thought I want you to notice. Measurement from the centre of the Tee, not from anywhere on the field, nor from another. Are you flattering yourselves that you are to be judged by the standard of righteousness you set up for yourselves, and by the conduct of some other man? Are you ever excusing your own faults because you see inconsistencies in others. Oh! folly of men! Do you measure the distances between the stones

that lie in the circles to see where you lie in respect to the centre Tee. No! No! You measure from the center of the Tee. You are not to be judged by your own idea of righteousness, nor by the obliquities of other men; you are to be judged according to your nearness, or remoteness to Him, who is the brightness of the Father's glory and the express image of His person. Behold the man, said Pilate, of Jesus, coming down the steps of the Roman Government House. Behold the man, the ages have echoed ever since. Get near to Jesus, in feeling, in faith, in character, and you are near the centre of the Tee.

Notice also, measurement is made to the part of the stone that is nearest to the Tee. I see the mercy of God in that. God takes a man at his best and not at his worst, not even at his average. We are such queer compounds, that in one part of us we may be very good, and in another part of us very bad. How many men, of good heart, but weak will; hard in money dealing, but kind

to the poor; quick in speech, but sorry a moment afterward; evil in many ways, but a spot of true, genuine manhood hid away somewhere.

Let us hope, in the final measurement, that the measurement will be to the best there is in man, for the best there is in man, is the part that is nearest to God.

Another rule is, no stone shall be considered within a circle, unless it clear it, and half way in the world and half way in the Kingdom will not do. A preponderance of your total self must be in the Kingdom. Almost, but not altogether, is to fail, Near the kingdom is not in the kingdom. I say my last word to you this morning, when I urge you a full-hearted acceptance of the Lord Jesus Christ, as the only way of salvation provided for a lost world. Over the line: that is the point. Within the circle! Every one of us must come into well understood relations with Jesus, and that ought to be done to-day. Procrastination is like coming onto the ice after the game is finished. In-

decision is like hurling your stone with your eyes shut, and you do not know whether it will lie within the circles, or go spinning on beyond the Tee, away from God and on towards the eternal darkness. With a clear mind, a steady heart, and with faith in Jesus, throw your life forward towards the goal. You shall not miss; you shall win it. You shall lie within the golden circles. Brothers will be there to greet you. Hands you have helped will be stretched out to welcome you. The highest, most exhilarant moment of your life on earth will be but as a sip to the full and ecstatic moment when you feel yourself safe in the eternal Home. Do not fail, friends, of that great reward.



# The Game of Life

I Cor. ix: 25

January 20th, 1895





## The Game of Life.

“ Know ye not that they which run in a race, run all, but one receiveth a prize? Even so run, that ye may obtain.”—I Cor. ix: 24.

Or, if Paul were living in these days, he would say;

Know ye not that they which play the game of Curling, play all, but one receiveth the prize? Even so in the game of life; so play, that ye shall receive the prize.

I call this sermon “The Game of Life,” not that I think that life is a holiday time, or a game on the ice, or in the field. No, life is a very serious thing, and it can be made to be, by each of us, a still more serious thing if we do not play it properly.

But a game is a contest, and this is our first point; *Life is a contest*. This is so from the beginning. The boy must hold his own on the play ground and in the class room. The young man, beginning to feel the stir of the great world, urged out from the chimney nook by the necessities of life, enters at once upon an arena, and he must do his best to

make a livelihood; keep his head up among men. Invariably the men who succeed are the men who are up and at it early in the morning, prompt, faithful, diligent, doing more than is required of them, making themselves useful and indispensable to employers or to society. The world has but little use for men who come five minutes late to work, and when they are at work do it half-heartedly, prompt to drop hammer and lay aside apron when the whistle blows. They are the men who are first laid off when slack times come, and who are always in trouble and in debt. A man must have a contest with himself to overcome constitutional weaknesses; points of diffidence and self-distrust, and be his best at any moment of life. That is one object of the competition of life, to develop in us an all-around manhood.

As we advance farther into life the contest grows sharper; we take upon ourselves responsibilities, we become sponsors for the lives and welfare of others. Every latent

ability, every particle of our vitality, every muscle of our anatomy is brought into exercise, and we feel we are in the thick of the strife. Every day the strife is renewed. Every night finds us encamped on the field. New difficulties appear at every hand. As we advance further into life we find impediments in the way. The old body cannot bear this ceaseless strain. It begins to give out. We find ourselves sick for the first time, and then we continue the fight with an enemy within the stronghold. Cares and sorrows come to us that break the spirit and loosen our grasp upon the things around us; senses begin to fail, and then it becomes a question if we can hold our place against younger men pushing to the front. They are feeling all the push of necessity and ambition. They are where you were once, trying to get a foothold, and you are clinging with desperate tenacity to your place for the sake of the family yet dependent upon you. At last comes death, and the old man is borne to the grave by the comrades that are left in

the field and by younger men who have learned to honor and admire the veteran. And it seems to me in the new industrial brotherhoods that are arising in this age of the world, these facts ought to be more distinctly recognized and provided for, and old age, with its necessary helplessness, ought not to be considered as the most undesirable portion of life; and the old man not feel himself to be an encumbrance and in the way; but old age should be considered the time of glory, of honor after long toil and fight; of more careful attention and ministry. Brotherhoods should take care of the veterans and convert the competition of life into endeavor to shield and care for the aged.

Again: A game is a contest for a prize, and this is our second point, *Life is a contest for a prize*. And here we begin to see what life is; at what it should aim and what is the final goal. Can you find in anything earthly a prize worthy of your immortal self and that self given out in all its excellence and power? I bring you face to face with a

question which, if answered rightly, would determine your methods of life and the quality of your character. Is wealth a sufficient prize for you to seek with all your might? Would you be willing to lose eternity for the sake of unlimited gold? Is political honor reward sufficient to satisfy your immortal thirst? Is the history of the men whom this country has feted and feasted and decorated with plumes and plaudits of a kind to make you willing to give up all hope of hereafter for it? Oh! any sensible man with a mind and a conscience and thirst for immortality within him, will answer these questions soon enough. Earth's rewards, earth's honors, desirable as they are in themselves, and having their use and place, cannot satisfy something within man that longs for infinite satisfaction. A blow of sorrow will make them look so insignificant and dim; a false step on your part will change applause into abuse, and a bright day will turn on the instant into fog and darkness and cold east wind.

For that reason I find the inducements which the word of God brings to bear upon us, as incentives to right living, more congenial to our tastes and adapted to our natures. What are the prizes that God sets before you as incentives to right living?

1. A Plaudit: a word of high praise, a cheer; an enthusiasm as of many voices. Some men find their highest ambition satisfied if they can be greeted with cheers and live in the applause of the people.

You know how it is on the ice when the game stands even and the final shot is to decide who is the winner. Oh! how intent are all the watchers around the Tee; with what care and bracing of the nerves do you prepare for the last shot; how careful your aim. A look at the skip to see what you are to do and where the stane is to lie. The stane leaves the hand; it glides along the smooth ice, curling outward as it goes; quick and lively the brooms do their work, and the well-aimed stane does its work and the game is yours. What burst of cheers! what shaking

of brooms! what congratulations and what good-natured chafing! and best of all, the skip says: "Weel played! verra weel played!"

I point you to another time in the hereafter. You have been playing a life game for many years. You have kept the self in sweet subjection to the will of God. You have followed the commands of honor and manhood. You have been brave and patient in the day of storm and adversity. You have put aside many inducements to neglect duty, religion and God. But you have held to your onward and upward course, and you are nearing the time of your great reward. You approach the innumerable company of the redeemed who, like you, have played the game of life with eternal happiness in view, and you enter the presence of the King like a stane gliding into the Tee, and oh, the greatness and the gladness of the moment! Oh! the shout of hallelujahs from million throats! oh, the number of the hands stretched forth to greet you—a father's hand, a mother's



hand, a child's hand; but best of all, the plaudit of the Master—"Well done, good and faithful servant; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord!"

Another prize is the eternal rest. Not idleness, mind you, but the beautiful and co-operative and satisfied interplay of all your powers. A time of rest; of satisfaction; of clear understanding and of praise.

That quiet moment at the close of the day, after the evening meal, when you draw up to the fire for chat with family or friends, or going over the affairs of the day, is symbol of it. That spell of rest in the year's busy circle when you can get away to the sea side, or the country side in the summer time, and let the murmur of the sea into your soul, and let the shining of the stars illuminate your nature, and you get a better understanding of life and its duties—that is symbol of it. God crowns the toil and the struggle of life with a time of eternal rest. A time to ask questions if you are not satisfied; a time to mark His wondrous dealings with you; a



time to see things that you never saw before; a time for tuning your harp, and as a full disclosure of God's gracious providences to you sweep over you, you will strike your well-tuned harp and raise your voice in praise to Him who sitteth upon the throne and unto the Lamb forever.

Another prize is the immortal crown. Paul prized that reward above all others. He ever lived with the crown in view—an incorruptible crown; an immortal crown; a crown of life. I banish, by a word, the mystery that hangs between the visible and the invisible. I see as in a vision the innumerable company of the redeemed. I see the faces I once knew and loved. They are shining with celestial radiance. I know them again; I call them by their names. Some I knew in humble homes, in sad places, and the bed of death was not a bed of roses. Some I knew in hard places, in great temptation, in a great battle with self and evil. Some I knew as good and honest and friendly brother men, doing their duty every day as

God showed it to them. Some were sweet, true and lovely angel spirits inhabiting an earthly tabernacle, but they all wear crowns, halos of glory; each one portraying in some way the life and victories of each.

And we here will be wearing crowns some day. We shall know each other there. Oh! is it not worth our while to play the game of life as best we can with such a reward in view.

Then again, a game is a contest with a prize in view, but it must be played *according* to rules, and those rules are drawn up in the best interest of all concerned, and to bring out the best points in the game and the greatest skill in the player, and this is my third point: Life is such a game, and it is played for a prize; played according to rule, and these rules drawn up in the interests of the game and the contestants. This world was all right as God made it. And this world will come out all right, even with sin in it, as God overrules it. God has set down rules for living. He has set up limita-

tions. He has established prohibitions. Men complain about this. They do not want rules, they say; they want freedom to do as they please. They do not want limitation, but unrestricted use of all their powers. They do not want prohibitions, but their own sweet, variable, inconstant evil will. Who is right about this, God or man? The whole matter of human contentment and human happiness and best progress for the race lies in your answer to that question. Was it right and best and wise for God to say to Adam, One tree of the garden thou shalt not eat of; if so, then God-given prohibitions are wise. And if we do not respect them we are sinners like unto our first parent. Was it right and wise in God to give the Ten Commandments? If so, then limitations to human freedom are wise; and if we do not stay within these, we are sinners like those who suffered the resentment of God in the wilderness. Behold, I pray you, the wisdom of God and the love of God in the restrictions He has placed upon you in the

rules for moral conduct, in rules for daily guidance. They are best for yourself and certainly best for all concerned. And what are some of the rules of the game of life ?

1. Equality as regards essential manhood. Not equality as to physical powers, or mental equipment, a social position, but equality in essential manhood. No Curler can doubt or dispute that rule. One of the chief excellences of the game is that you meet on the level field of ice; different in stature; different in amount of worldly possessions; different in regard to social position, but your feet are on the same level; the lord and the peasant are alike; no favors; strength, skill, brotherhood, are the only things to be considered.

“ The rank is but the guinea’s stamp,  
The man’s the gowd for a’ that.”

Take that thought with you into the contest of life, and let the poor man feel his self-respect and his worth, and let the rich man not forget the plane from which he sprung,

and let the titled not forget that earth's distinctions all vanish in the presence of the Holy God.

2. Play fair. Now you see the reason for rules in the game, and that is, that no one take an unfair advantage of another; that no one presume because of wealth, or ancestral titles, over another. Rules are for the purpose of guarding essential manhood, honoring clear grit and developing the strength of muscle and keenness of eye. Fair play would hardly be possible were it not for the rules of the game.

You banish from the statute books the Ten Commandments and where would society be in one year's time? Take away all restrictions and prohibitions, and we could not find locks and bars enough to keep our property. Oh! that men would see this clearly as they ought to see it, and govern themselves by it, in business and in fellowship relations.

3. Respect for one another's rights and privileges. In your noble game of Curling you never step in and take another's turn to

play, and he who would for an instant take any unfair advantage of another would feel the weight of the brother's scorn. In a word, he is the beloved man among you who loves the game for the game's sake, stands on a level and asks no favors for himself; is scrupulously careful to obey the rules, and is just as careful to maintain an opponent's privilege. What is this but respecting the personality of others? As the Apostle Paul says: Look not every man on his own things, but also on the things of others. Respect the rights of others! Yes, and regard their weaknesses, too. And you will have more opportunities to exercise such regard in the game of life than you have in the game of curling. Pity, charity, mercy, must be brought into exercise in the great competition of the life game. The ice is not more slippery under your feet than the place where many of our brethren in the world stand and have to play their game. You know what a step means when you are about to play the stone; you know what a flaw in the ice is to a running

stane. You know if you did not have the help of the brethren, your stane would never lie within the circle of the Tee. Oh! do not these things emphasize before you the necessity of fair play and respect of another's personality and pity for weaknesses? Never tempt a brother; never let another tempt him who is a brother. Never let the exhilaration of victory overcome your self-control. Keep the lips unstained of oaths. Keep the idea of brotherhood sweet and kindly. Oh! in all your life contest carry with you the principles that control you on the ice.

Again: A game is a contest for a prize, played according to rules and under the supervision of an Umpire. This is my fourth point: *Life is a contest*; a contest for a prize; a contest played according to rules, and under the supervision of an Umpire. I am lifting your life, my brother, up into grand regions. Life is run, or played, or fought under the gaze of the All-seeing Eye. Keep that thought in your mind, and it gives you patience, fortitude, strength and cheer.



Respect the personality and rulings of the Umpire. God must be to you more than a name if you are going to live right in this world. If God is, as He is represented to be, the God who filleth all in all; the enveloping God; the God in whom we live and move and have our being, then we are more foolish than the man staring up at the sun and denying his existence, if we doubt or deny the existence of God. Do you respect His will? do you respect His day? do you keep His laws? do you believe in His Son? How long would you keep in your company a man who ignored the existence of the Umpire and disregarded his existence? You know you would not play with such a man. Be honest now; be practical. Do you recognize the existence of the great Umpire, or do you live from day to day as though there were no God; beginning the day without prayer; pursuing your vocations only with an eye on self-aggrandizement, and ending the day in scheming and folly? God is the Umpire of the game of your life. We are



to give an account of the deeds done in the body.

Respect also the decision of the Umpire. What is a decision of an Umpire? It is the interjection of his human judgment and thought in upon the course or errors of a game. That judgment may be founded on a clear understanding of all the rules and points of the game, or upon precedent not as yet formulated into rule, or upon the clear seeing into the exact justice of the position. In the progress of the game there comes an eager moment; a point to be decided; heated and excited men are gathered in a knot and arguing and talking. The Umpire seeing the difficulty; seeing the point at issue; from his knowledge of all points of the game; or from precedent, or from clear seeing into the exact justice of the case, pronounces judgment gives decisions. Do you see what that is? The interjection of higher will and wisdom in upon your controversies. You admit that sort of thing; you submit to it; you forsake your position; you govern yourselves accord-

ingly. I pray you give me your attention. Things are constantly happening in your lives that cannot be brought under any law you know; that cannot be explained by all your knowledge of what things ought to be or ought not to be. Recall only the experiences of the last year and see if that is not so. In vain you will ransack your own mind, in vain you seek the advice of friends to seek to understand the strange things happening in life. Do one thing more my friend. Seek the judgment of the Umpire; listen to His voice; let His decision fall in upon your turmoil and give you peace. Let His word come to your sorrowful spirit and give you resignation. Do you believe in the interposition of God in these days? I do, as clearly as in the days when He was in the flesh and He fed the five thousand with five loaves of bread and stilled the waters of stormy Gennesareth. And interposition is proof of God's existence and of His kindly and just supervision of our earthly affairs. I pray you in points in life's game hard to

decide ; in experiences hard to be borne ; in rights imperilled and in wrongs threatened, appeal to that ear that heard the cry of the children of Israel when in bondage and to that eye that notes the sparrow's fall, and to that particular knowledge that counts the very hairs of your head.

And one more point I want to make before I dismiss you all, and that is, the right of the one who gives the prize to add any rules he pleases to the already well acknowledged rules of the game. In the rules for special medals we find this section : "The donor shall have the right to lay down additional rules, if it be found that the established rules are not sufficiently explicit." My friends, Christianity comes in under that section. From the very beginning of human existence there have been more than *rules of living* even the promise of one to come. And the best life is the life that has been filled and inspired by faith in that one to come. The ten commandments are not sufficient to meet all the points of human weakness and tempta-

tions. If you kept all the moral law you would be but a moral man. God wants you to be more than a moral man. He has added to the moral law the last and great requirement, "Believe in my Son." According to your own section you concede the justice of that position. The donor has a right to lay down additional rules if the rules already in existence be not sufficient. To all that has gone before in the Old Testament God has laid down this rule in the New Testament, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." I do not know whether you all here this morning have adopted this last rule for the government of your life games. If it never has been clearly before you previously, I pray you recognize it now. It is absolutely necessary for you to play the game of life so as to please the donor. You must adopt as the special rule of your lives, belief in his son Jesus Christ.

And how can you accept Him ?

Accept Him as He is set forth in Scripture.

As God in human form.

As Saviour dying for the sins of men.

As Redeemer who carried back from the grave your ransom.

As your friend and brother and present help in every time of need.

I need not argue the right of God to make that rule. You acknowledge that. He is the donor of the prize of the crown and the eternal rest. I do plead with you to adopt that last rule of the game as the special rule of life, and you will find it one of those strange impelling rules that makes obedience to all other rules easy and joyous.



A Great Player in Life's  
Bonspiel

1 Cor. ix: 26

January 19th, 1896





## A Great Player in Life's Bonspiel.

I therefore so run, not as uncertainly, so fight I,  
not as one that beateth the air.—1 Cor. ix: 26.

Let me read the whole section for it is in this section we find the suggestion for this morning's sermon, a great player in Life's Bonspiel.

A great player in life's Bonspiel must remember he is *one of many*. Know ye not that they which run in a race run *all*. Life may be looked upon as a game, a race, a battle, but we are *all* in it. Many contestants crowd the field. Let no one claim a larger place than is his due. Let no one claim privileges that do not belong to him. Birth and blood may be accidents, or orderings, but in either case they are opportunities and obligations of help to the poor, the fallen, the downcast. Civilization has utterly reversed the Lord's directions. Instead of the poor worshiping the rich, the titled, the aristocratic, the royal, these, because of their great ability and position ought to serve the poor and the feeble. He who would be great among you let him

be your servant. Do not crowd. Do not take another's place. There is room enough for all, if you keep your place and take no more than belongs to you. Have a word of cheer and comfort for others as you pass along. We need more community of feeling, more brotherhood, more of divine charity. Have feeling for the tramps for they too are in the race. Have pity for those upon whom appetite has laid its spell, weakening the heart and adding weights to the feet. Have sorrow for those who stop to weep at a new made grave. Have a heartsome word for those who bear many burdens. I plead for brotherhood among all men; for cordial, affectionate relations between people speaking the same English tongue. In a word, I pray that the Spirit of Jesus may be in all players in life's great Bonspiel.

A great player, in life's Bonspiel will live with due appreciation of the contest in which he finds himself, and of the reward in view. Even in your game upon the ice you do not seek those who have no appreci-

ation of the merits of the game, and no particular interest in its history and progress. You want keen curlers; and a man's conduct as towards your game is greatly influenced by his view of the sport.

So in life a man's conduct is very much influenced by his opinions, by his view of things. What is your view of the great life of which you form a part?

Thrown into life with no consent of yours; whirled like a leaf on the wind; driven like a ship on a torrent; ending in a plunge into a deep down chasm; or projected far out upon a shoreless sea; is that your view?

Life is a game of chess, some say, and men are pawns, knights, bishops, and a hand from without places them as it will, and though you may represent something, a superior something perhaps, the play is not yours and the result of the game is not in your hands, and you have but to be moved hither and thither, accept the bludgenings of fate and the fortune of the side you happen to be on. Is that your view of life?

All is chance. Life is a lottery, some say. Place of birth is chance. Whether Saxon, Norman, Dane, or African blood, is a chance. Confederate or Unionist is chance. Victory or defeat is chance. The future is uncertain as a puff of wind. And the grave is as meaningless as a soap bubble, and the issues of eternity may depend on a passing word. Is that your view of life ?

All men are liars. Life is a scheme some say; a deep laid artifice. Who is shrewdest? Cheat, or you will be cheated. Get the best of others or they will get the best of you. Trust nobody. Keep your own secrets. Hear all things, tell nothing. Keep your own heart hard and let others be soft if they will; less hurt for you and more for them. Go jauntily through the world. Give no hostages to fortune. Die in perfume and flowers and with soft, low music playing, but die in unbelief and drop into nothingness. Is that your view of life ?

Life is a set figure, some say. Fate is the arbiter. You live because you were created.

You move because you are pushed. You must go where you are ordered. You must stand where you are put. You must reach the goal which is set for you. Free will is a fiction of the imagination. Man does not steer, he is driven. The tiller was lashed when the voyage began. If fate orders heaven, heaven it will be. If it order hell, you can do nothing but suffer. A blind, remorseless giant is at the head of affairs and we are puppets in his hands. Is that your view of life?

Each and every one of these views has something in them that answers somewhat to the real state of things, and yet each and every one is essentially false. It is true we were not our own parents and did not choose the place of our birth. It is true that each one of us stands for something and it may be a superior something, but are moved onwards by a power that we cannot resist. It is true that most important results have their beginnings in what was a sportive, foolish whim at the first and chance does seem to be a reality among us. It is true that in among

the sober, solid, true things of this life there runs a thread of artifice and fraud. It is true that an element of fatalism is in every life, but I deny the deep down chasm and the shoreless sea. I deny that man is only a pawn and not a person with no power to project his own self upon the world and change the issues of the battle. I deny that indetermination has greater part to play in this world than the deliberate, intelligent preference of men, and I deny that eternity is dependent on a puff of wind. I deny that all men are liars, and I would not die like the voluptuary, and in my creed death does not end all. It is true that the element of strong decree is laid upon stars, and earth, and men, but I deny that the tiller was lashed when the voyage began, and one ship drives right on jagged rocks—another to peaceful waters and to welcoming friends.

There is a better and a truer view of life than either of these. Let us take that view. God at the beginning. Wise purpose and foresight in the placing of the individual.



Wisdom and almightiness in the fact that God has ordained, not stagnancy, but movement as the permanent condition for all things. We must on. Whether we will or no, we must on. We must make progress towards the end. Just as the stone after it has left the hand must on towards the goal, so we must move on towards the end. A stern necessity drives us on from the cradle to the grave, but between these two points are all the experiences of our human lot, love of home, of mother, of native land, of wedded bride, of business ventures, of hard work, of hard knocks, bitter disappointments, change, success, perhaps failure, and these certainly give us opportunity for the exercise of all our powers in the way of preference, loyalty, industry and hope, and we reach the goal, Oh, so different in personality than what we imagined when as young lads, we looked out upon life with great hopeful eyes and with hearts yearning to take great works into their embrace, and with strength great enough to throw the wrestling world. Ah, if the spir-

itual man has arisen in us; if character begins to shape itself after the fashion of the man Christ Jesus; if in some way we find satisfaction in things heavenly and divine; the thing has come to pass which God had designed and life is with us a great success. We are to-day one year older than when we met in this house last year, and some of our number have finished this life and gone to their reward, and we a little longer wait, carrying on as best we can the work left for us to do. But thank God, light hath shone upon us from the face of Jesus Christ. We go not to the grave, to nothingness, and the dark, but as believers in a risen Lord, we are marching off towards the light, towards the grandest strains of music, towards coronation. We shall hear the plaudit, well done good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.

This is the *scripture view of life*. Tell me, is it not better and truer than those despairing, cynical, melancholy views of which we spoke. Familiarize yourself with it. Cherish



it. Rejoice in it, and it will influence your total life and make your dying bed soft as downy pillows are.

Again, A great player in life's Bonspiel, will not only have a true view of life as a complete picture, but will be mindful of all the details of the scene. A Bonspiel on the ice is not only the contestants, and umpire, and playing, and victory, but there are minor matters, very important and very influential in deciding the game, such as, the hack in the ice, the definitely laid out game, the accurate measurements, the laws of the game, and withal courtesy, fairness, justice on the part of the contestants. So in life's great Bonspiel there are minor details, small in themselves, but important as bearing upon the great result, which need to be well considered and obeyed. Let us look at some of them.

1. Be mindful of the slightest moral obligation. If I were careful to carry on the analogy, I should call that the hack in the ice. In the great Olympic games, the man

who is going to take part, must be careful of his diet, of the bath: the daily exercise and all that goes to make up a perfect physical system. And you know that in your own game of curling, the game is not learned in a day, but after long practice, and the man who wears the medal is one who has steady nerves, a cool head, skill, calculation, and strength timed to the demands of the occasion.

At the foundation all things are simple. In chemistry we have a few simple elements which in combination make up all the marvellous results of the great science. In geology we have the igneous rocks. In astronomy the star dust. In geometry a few axioms, self-evident truths. And so in morality there are a few simple facts which must be regarded and obeyed if you would make the whole after-life worthy of its origin and its ending. "To your own self be true." "Obey conscience, the voice of God in the soul." "Be true to your intuitions." "Listen to the voice of reason." "Move in the God-stream." "Be like a boat to the current of

God's will." I declare unto you, a man can not reach the heights of manhood who is impatient of these simple, fundamental truths of morals.

2. Let strong assurance of future and heavenly rewards enter your minds and more and more control it. There is a visual line that girts us round and you know it. You are approaching nearer to it every day and you know it. What lies beyond that line? What happens the moment after death? What enjoyments crowd upon the soul? What employments fill your hands? What station are you to occupy? These things need to be considered by us as being as real as the things we see about us in every day life.

I would not have you think any the less of daily duties, but I believe it would be good for manhood, for civilization, if it were more concerned about eternity. I would have this life filled with all varieties of activity, but I would have the thought of eternity doming it, as the sky domes this earth; sometimes flushed with the golden colors of the morn-

ing, anon resplendent with the glories of a dying day, and every night the solemn stars shining down upon it. It makes life all that it ought to be, to be thus smitten through and through with the intimations of eternity and judgment.

Again, live with a purpose in view. As Paul says, I run not as uncertainly, so fight I not as one that beateth the air. Set not your goal too far ahead of you, but set it ahead. Raise not the standard so high as to discourage you, but high enough to keep your head raised to see it and all your powers at your best to attain it. When you are about to take your part in your game of curling you do not set your foot anywhere and shut your eyes and fling your stone, and yet I fear a great many men play the game of life with no thought, no calculation, no end in view. They run but do not know whether they are on the track, on the right road or not. They are boxers in the Olympic games but they beat the air, they fight shadows. They are curlers on the ice, but do not know

their rank, the club they belong to, when their turn comes to play, nor where to fling the stone. Out upon such aimlessness! Out upon such wavering! Better pursue a mistake, boldly, courageously, deathlessly, as James the Fourth of Scotland, who finished his Bonspiel at Flodden Field and died in glorious defeat. Better far pursue a true theory, a real thing, and follow it day by day, with prayer, and effort, and endurance till God shall crown you with his joy. I do not put before you great prizes in life's Bonspiel. But why not live to make your home pleasant, your wife happy and your children glad. Surely that is an object well worth the attention of us all. Why not live to be among men in business and society; respected, loved, looked up to, surely that is within the reach of us. Why not live so that men will say, the neighborhood is better because you live in it. A brave, cheery heart, a good, honest man, a noble citizen and a believing christian, this I think will fill the horizon for most of us.

Another thing. Live with due appreciation

of the comparative value of things. They do it, says Paul, to obtain a corruptible crown, but we an incorruptible. Paul could appreciate things going on right around him and yet the full consent and power of his mind were given to things above him. He was able to value things at their true worth, put them in their right place, use but not abuse; enjoy but not be enslaved; conscious of peril and yet all the time singing the psalm of victory. That is right. There is not a thing that God has made, but if you use it according to his intention, it will add to your felicity.

Things were not made to entrap, demoralize, degrade us; but to be so used, with carefulness, with due regard to higher things, with supreme consideration to the will of God, that in the choice, in the self-restraint, in the consideration for others, the best qualities of manhood will be developed. And, friends, that quality of mind that can weigh things, can determine the value of things, can arrange in orderly way things according to their in-



trinsic worth, and then to govern yourselves in accordance with your own conclusion is one of the noblest characteristics of the great player in life's bonspiel. I keep my body in subjection, says Paul. Why? Because the body was the least important part of his manhood. He would make the body a daily sacrifice in order that He might be transformed into the image of Jesus Christ. And so with His mind. He kept that in abeyance to the demands of His spiritual nature, and when God spake to Him, when the Holy Ghost breathed upon Him, He was as obedient to Him as the flute is obedient to the human breath. And that is manhood, friends, the finest manhood, to be obedient to God's will, as weather vane is obedient to the wind, or soldier to his commanding officer, or player to his skip.

One more point and I am done. Live with the thought in view that failure in these respects which make true manhood is failure of heaven. Tremendous consequences follow our actions here. You know better than I do

that when the stone is once thrown, it is thrown forever; a segment of time is added on to eternity; the present has glided into the past; an act has been done that cannot be undone; the stone is gliding to its resting place. Learn by all this the inevitable results of human actions unless some way be devised by which atonement can be made and failure be lifted into victory. And I would not have you leave this house without hearing again the old, old story that Jesus was our substitute; Jesus was our atoning sacrifice; somehow our faults are dropped into His great forgiveness; somehow our sins are treated to the wonderful chemistry of the blood and the guilty stains are cleansed away; somehow the condemned sinner is made into a justified saint by the operation of God's grace; somehow the army of sinners marching down to punishment with downcast faces and beating their breasts, are transformed into an army of ransomed ones, clothed in white robes and singing songs of victory and marching up to glory.



# Fine Points in the Game of Life

Lev. xix: 18

January 10th, 1897



## Fine Points in the Game of Life.

Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.—Lev. xix: 18.

I have much to say to you on the fine points in the game of life, and I will therefore omit all introduction and fling the stone at once.

1. *The Object.*—A club, or association of men, or party that has not an object, is like a stone flung anywhere on the ice, or an arrow shot anywhere into the air, or a boat launched without a tiller.

An object sharpens fellowship to a point, and a company of men are thus enabled to grave their wishes and convictions on the tablet of their times. The object of the curlers club is to encourage the game in which they take such delight, foster brotherhood among the members and elevate good conduct.

A man's life should have an object and indeed it would be for the betterment of our total social condition, if each and everyone of us should take it as our life object to foster

brotherhood and elevate good conduct. But brotherhood must have no limited definition, no local boundaries. It cannot even be included in a national fellowship.

Brotherhood that is worthy of being the object of an immortal soul's living, must be bounded only by the boundaries of the human race. Brother to every man, but crony to your own special friend, whatever his color, whatever his station, whatever his religion, brother in such a sense, that you are, as St. Paul says, so to live, so as to please him for good unto edification.

And that I believe is the value of all clubs and associations that have a worthy object. They kindle a fire. They diffuse warmth. They cultivate fellowship. As we put a stove in a cold room and light a fire, it warms the whole room, so associations of men for the cultivation of brotherhood ought to warm the general air. Your heart warms towards a man who is a curler. Does it warm towards a man who is not a curler, but simply a man? Oh, believe me, you miss one of the objects

of brotherhood if you do not feel genial and warm towards those who are without.

It may seem strange to you that associations of men who bind themselves together and skill themselves in playing a game, in order to compete with and gain the victory over other and like associations of men, should have for their object the fostering of the brotherhood of their members. You might think that such a thing would tend directly to foster antipathies, and clannishness and sectionalism. And this brings us to look for a moment upon one of the most beautiful things in human life, upon one of the sacred things of human life, and that is, that honest division of feeling between two men can cement true friendship rather than destroy it; honest rivalry, conducted in all fairness, and in all justness, brings out the best there is in man in the way of effort and in the way of brotherly regard; and that to belong to parties that may be conscientiously opposed, need not separate us in our deep human feelings.

Once, during the war, the armies of the North and South were encamped near each other, divided only by an arrow river. In the evening the hum of the opposing hosts could be heard in the still air, the music of the rival bands and the singing around the camp fires. They played and sang their national anthems. The Star Spangled was answered by the Bonnie Blue Flag, Rally Round the Flag, by My Maryland, My Maryland, but when one band struck up Home, Sweet Home, the other quickly joined, and the two great armies were singing together, the song that made them one in human feeling.

The objection to the proposed parade of the Blue and the Gray on last 4th of July did not come so much from the men who stood in arms, as from those who never saw a battle.

There are many ties in this world of ours,  
 Fetters of friendship and fetters of flowers,  
 And true lover's knots, I ween.  
 And the girl and the boy are found by a kiss,  
 But there is never a kind old friend like this,  
 We've drank from the same canteen.

When great lawyers finish the case in which they have put heat and argument and all the energies of their nature, they clasp hands again, go down the court house steps, linked arm in arm. Christendom is divided into many sects, and each has its convictions and its worship, but we are all one when we touch the sacrament, and are brothers when we kneel in prayer and say, Our Father.

And I look for a higher, holier brotherhood between the North and the South, in all our well beloved country, bye and bye; for a higher, holier brotherhood between all the denominations of christendom in our blessed covenant and work, bye and bye, and in a universal brotherhood, sweet, kindly, magnanimous, bye and bye.

2. When a company of men desire to come together for a specific object, there is always one act, which precipitates the purpose of every heart and a new association is born into the world. And I find that the payment of the initiation fee is that final act. A man may be proposed for membership, elected to

membership, may sign constitution and by-laws, but he is not a member until he has paid his initiation fee, *i. e.*, he can not become a member of the body without cost to himself, which cost he is willing to discharge again and again.

The brotherhood of man, or the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ, is not going to be built up except at the cost of each and every one of us. And strange to say there is one thing to be paid over by each and every one of us, and that is self. Somehow a good and true self must be given to the cause of brotherhood and the kingdom of Christ. The man who stands among his fellow men and just absorbs and absorbs is as useless as a sponge. You cannot make a curling stone out of a sponge, nor a curler out of a sponge-man, nor a world-wide brother out of a selfish man. You have no use for a sponge-man in any club, society, church, or party. We have use for men who are willing to be at cost for the sake of the cause. How can you foster brotherhood, except by being



in yourself a brother according to the fullest definition of the term. How can you elevate the general good conduct except by exhibiting good conduct everywhere. How can you foster the interests of morality, temperance, home, except by exhibiting temperance and love of home yourselves. I believe that each of us here present this morning has paid the initiation fee that makes us members of the brotherhood of men and it was at the same time pledge of our loyalty, for there are annual dues; a continuation of the initiation fee, a recommitment of ourselves to the purposes of the order, an oath again sworn; a kissing of the flag, a bowing at the cross. We glorify a very common-place act when we recognize its higher meaning. And you never pay your club dues, or your pew rent in church, or subscriptions to the cause of charity, but you recommend yourself to the sacred causes these things are allied to.

Let us pay our annual dues to-day to the cause of brotherhood and good conduct, and let us vow quietly and secretly that we will

be better brothers from this time forth, and this year of '97 will be better for this day's work.

We are getting down to the ice. We are getting down to the real life of men as lived among men. And we are to see to it, as far as possible, that every man has a fair chance in life. "The length of the rink the same for every man." The weight of the stone the same for every man, or proportionally the same; the same rules of the game for every man, and no good curler ever complains of rules that rest upon all; or of the directions of his skip; and the same condemnation for every man who is careless or indifferent, for the brotherhood, for its own protection needs to show its severe side to the obstinate offender.

And here I must confess is one of the most disturbing things about our present condition, the fatality that pursues some and the good fortune that pursues another. Men are so different in their general make up and their disposition; they start in life in such

different conditions, some have great and terrible disadvantages and others, on the other hand, are smiled on from the beginning to the end of their course. With some it is a fight and struggle all the way and with others it is smooth seas and favoring winds from shore to shore, and we are amazed at the spectacle of human life and we reserve decision upon a man's failure or fall, until all of the facts of the case are in. But one or two considerations should be maintained; viz: 1. There must be a greater infusion of brotherly regard and charity in our whole industrial and social life. More brotherhood, in the wide definition of the term, is the want of this age. 2. It should be the aim of all brotherhoods to secure a fair chance for each to earn his living, or his fortune as the case may be, out of the world. If these conditions are secured for them, then let each man play in his turn; let him have an unobstructed course, let him have the help of friendly brooms, let him have the praise for skill and strength of arm and good judgment, for his victory is the victory of

the brotherhood and it is true the wide world over, if it be considered rightly, that the wealth, the good fortune, the scholarship, the prowess of one brother, if these be rightly estimated and rightly used, in reference to all, are the wealth and richness and prowess of the universal brotherhood.

And that is what we are aiming for, that is what I believe society is rising towards, a splendid pride in any one brother's success, and on his part, a generous sharing with the universal brotherhood all he has gained of wealth, or honor, or spiritual life.

And when there is this fair field and equal opportunity secured for all who play the game of life there is one grand consideration that needs to be observed, which I find put down strongly in the rules for playing the game of curling, viz: "Do not mar a running stone."

You will remember that into that running stone a man has put all of himself, his strength, his determination, his skill, his judgment, his desire for victory. Oh, it seems

to me, at first glance, it would be cruel to interrupt, or to attempt to defeat so honorable an effort. No wonder that your instructions on this point are many and that condemnation against the offender is severe.

Ah, do you not see in this a symbol of another game and another running stone? Do you not see the game of life, and a man doing his best for himself and for those dependent on him? Do you not see that it is kind, it is considerate, it is manly, to let a brother, or an adversary do his best and gain his prize? Do you not see that in the work of life, a man puts his whole self, his strength, his determination, his skill, his judgment, his desire for victory? Let him do his work. Let him run. Let him get near the prize. It is brotherly, it is kind, it is for the universal good that a man be permitted to do his best.

Oh, there are many ways of marring a running stone. While the stone is as yet in the hand of the player, while he is making up his mind, while he is delivering his shot, you are not to speak improperly to him; you are not

to taunt him, you are not to interrupt him; *i.e.*, you are not to shake the nerve, for the quiver of a nerve then means that he will lose the certainty of his aim; you are not to confuse his mind, for mental confusion here means not clear seeing of the Tee at the other end of the ice; you are not to distract his attention, for attention distracted then means loss of the victory for his side. In a word you are to let the man stand in the strength and grandeur of his own personality and do his best for the game and for the world. I would it might be so in our great sphere of human life! I do know men who have been injured and swayed from their course because at the beginning, some adversary, or false friend shook the budding resolution and defeated a noble life. I have known a taunt to so hurt a sunshiny nature that all good resolutions withered in a moment. I have known interruptions, at an inopportune time, to so distract and discourage, that a man has been moved from his original purpose, and he was lost to a noble work.



And when the stone has left the hand do not mar it as it runs. Let its impetus go on until it is spent. Let the aim reach its goal. Let the skill and the strength of the player be displayed in the work accomplished. Help him by the aid of the friendly besoms. There are many ways in which to mar a life aimed well and running well.

*Envy.* The meanest of the passions. It is not a virtue but a vice. Envy is at the bottom of much of the difference between labor and capital in these days. Two men born in the same town, and one runs ahead, succeeds; the other does not; and instead of congratulating his winning brother, he envies him and speaks disparagingly of him.

Oh! Envy hide thy bosom. Hide it deep,  
For a thousand snakes nest there, and hiss with  
black envenomed mouths.

*Criticism.* That always finds fault, that casts discouragement over the man himself and gathers to a head shreds of opposition in in many other minds. Criticising, wondrous wise, shaking of the head, venting scandal

that has no foundation; these things have soiled the reputation of many innocent men, and clouded over many a life's fair day.

Active opposition. Intentional damage. Men dare to do in real life, what you would not dare to do on the ice. You would not dare to put your broom in front of a running stone; or knock it slantwise by a well-directed blow from your own stone. And yet men do this to one another, in business, in employment. Oh! there is more of that than you think. Would God there were less. You know how it is; some man, by gifts, and strength, and industry, gets a little ahead of the rest; what sneers are indulged in, what captious criticism, what damaging remark, what scandalous judgment. Oh! the shame of it. Oh! the reproach of it to the brotherhood. Oh! that it could all be put out of life and that men would allow freedom to brother men to do the best they can for themselves, always with the understanding that the best is in some way to be returned to the general brotherhood.



Of the fine points in the game of curling, the one that interests us most at this present moment, is the point of guarding. A stone on the Tee is to be guarded by another stone placed in such position that no stone flung by any other player shall displace it. And that suggests to us, imperilled interests and how they are to be guarded. And no one will deny that interests that are dear and sacred are imperilled in these times.

The Sabbath day, with its old time quiet, its freedom from disquieting sounds and revelry; its opportunities to worship God; its opportunity for the spirit of grace and cleansing to come down upon the souls and bosoms of men and wash away the stains of the week, and to burnish up the conscience and right the man with his God. To whom shall we look for a guard for the Sabbath day, sooner than to old Scotia's sons, to the countrymen of John Knox. For while it is true, you are all "John Tamsen's bairns," it is also true, you are all John Knox's sons. You did well to discipline a curler's club

that went, as a club, junketing on the Sabbath day, defiling your good name.

And other things as well, in the great field of industry, in the great sphere of political rights and privileges, in the sacred altitudes of a man's right to govern himself according to his own religious convictions, are imperilled. Do you not need to put the guard stone before these imperilled interests. And who is that guard stone, but the man who holds his manhood from God, whose conscience and will are fortified by the inflow of the Spirit of God, who cares less for life than he does for Honor, and less for the world's treasures than he does for the approbation of God. And you who play with symbols, are in duty bound to be true to the things that the symbols symbolize; and every time you put a guard on the Tee, you need to pray, God make me a strong guard in every day and place, for any sacred interest that is imperilled.

And one thing more I desire to say in closing, and that is, there is an encircling

providence, there is an enswathing divine purpose, and the human race in the hands of God is but as a babe in the lap of its mother; and that though the beginnings of life are strangely mixed and confused, and the struggle of life is fiercer and hotter year by year, and the many unworthy ones seem to get the prizes, and many real, worthy fellows, real genuine men, but weak by constitutional weakness, by inherited deformity, never make even the hog score. I want to tell you that, after all, the average is pretty well kept, and the average line is on the incline, and society is yet to throw off its swaddling bands and run like a racer, and the infelicities of our present condition are to fade and disappear, and that which we all sigh for shall presently come, each man commencing life with fair prospects, each man permitted to make the best of himself, each man helped by every other man, and all the acquisitions of the strong and successful ones shared by the universal brotherhood. And you will come to the same conclusion if you will look

over your annual, which comes to us every year with an amount of useful information and pleasant reading, and notice that while honors are not easy, rewards are quite evenly distributed. Is not that a strange thing when you come to think about it, that clubs of men who are competing every year on the ice or on the Quoiter's field, share their victories whether they will or no. It is true, wherever games are played. It is true in the great life of which we form a part.

The rewards of life are pretty evenly shared. In monarchical countries, where rank protects itself by law and statute, men hold on to their positions with desperate clutch. Aristocracy has had a long innings, but its day draws to a close, and the masses and the middle classes are to have theirs. God make it a better day than the past, fuller of wisdom and kindness and Christianity.

In republics, where opportunities are open to all, the change of conditions is more rapid; one side does not hold the medal so long; the man on top to-day is on the decline

to-morrow. Victories are now with one and then with another, and real strength and skill have a chance to assert themselves, but—and this is the great value of generous rivalry—the best comes to the top and the whole world is better therefor. I believe we can take a lesson from this, and that lesson is, trust in the Almighty God and Heavenly Father, and love thy neighbor as thyself.



# Theology of Curling

Rom. ix: 16

January 16th, 1898





## Theology of Curling.

So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy.—  
Rom. ix: 16.

A Scotchman is naturally a theologian. Therefore I dare to speak to you this morning upon Theology of Curling. And a curling Scotchman, who is not a theologian has missed one of the sweetest things of his life. For just as it is one of the most delightful exercises of the mind, to look up from a symbol to the thing symbolized, to see, for instance in the alpha and omega on the wall in front of you, Jesus Christ, the beginning and the end, so it is one of the most interesting things about your game of curling, to see how many features of it point to a higher and spiritual truth.

I have, on previous occasions, spoken to you on the symbology of curling. My example in all this is the apostle Paul, who made the sports of the Olympic games, illustrations at least of experiences in the christian life. I have spoken to you of Christian-

ity and curling, and their points of analogy. I have spoken to you of the game of life, of the fine points in the game of life, of the good player in life's Bonspiel, and I conclude the series this morning by speaking to you of the Theology of curling. It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, nor in the great contest of life, it is not altogether of him that stands well braced in the ice and delivers his stone with practiced aim, but of God that sheweth mercy.

I want to call your attention first of all to the great revelation of the text, that back of all human life, with its strifes and competitions, its joys and its griefs, its games and its triumphs, its efforts and its defeats, there is a personal God, who holds within the compass of his vision and within his manipulation, all things that are. And what is more to the purpose, He is a kindly God. He is a God that sheweth mercy. You believe in God, do you not? But what kind of a God do you believe in? Let me emphasize before you this morning that He is a kindly God.

He is a God that sheweth mercy. We all need to know that. If you are a sinner and have violated God's laws and sinned against His tenderness, you need to know it.

It is very easy for men who have health, and success and victory to believe in a kindly God, but the man who is sick, and beaten and stripped, needs much more to know it and to rest in it, and to leave himself and his sorely troubled heart in His gentle care, believing, not only there is explanation, but recompense somewhere. Kindliness is at the heart of things. Long suffering is at the heart of things. Self denial is at the heart of things. Prof. Drummond showed that in his last book, the Ascent of Man. God is on the side of humanity. That is a primal fact and all other doctrines must be arranged according to it. I would as soon believe a skip would govern his men and his game against the best interests of curling, as I would believe that God would take sides against the creatures of his own love and care; and that conception of God does not shut out punishment

for sin and discipline for offenders, but makes them the agents for carrying out a loving purpose.

2. There is more in human life than human effort. Something in life over and above human effort. You did not play the game for the Dalrymple medal last winter. Why not? The day was set. The medal was ready. The game was called. Why was not the game played? The weather prevented. There was something to be taken into account over and above all your planning and arrangements. It is only an illustration of something that is occurring in the great life of the world and in the individual life as well, all the time. Sovereigns may partition Europe, but God must be reckoned with sooner or later. And the boundaries of kingdoms will be drawn by the finger of God. Men may plan, and scheme and labor, but God has something to say about every man's life.

That celebrated phrase maker, Matthew Arnold, defined God as the Eternal that makes for righteousness. It is a grand

phrase. If he had put in it the personal element, and called Him the personal God, the almighty and heavenly Father that makes for righteousness, we could have accepted, with thanks, the definition, What follows then? If God is a god who makes for righteousness, then the life that makes for righteousness with all its might, runs coincident with God and will have the aid of God, and all that is over and above human effort will be on his side. And the contrary is also true, the life that makes for unrighteousness and many a life does, will, sooner or later, run up against the thick bosses of Jehovah's bucklar. That means the defeat of unrighteousness, and such defeat is better for a man than victory. Take Jehovah into account in all your planning. Do not be ashamed to kneel and say, Lord show me Thy will. Do not be ashamed to confess that you consult the unknown reserves of God's mind in all your planning. Some one said to the Duke of Wellington, if such a thing had happened, and if such another thing had not occurred, the

issue of Waterloo had been different. The Duke of Wellington calmly replied: "I had supposed in the science of war all these probabilities were taken into account." If you would have your life run straight and true to the Tee, take into your account all the accessories of life and especially what God would have you be and do. Life will be a failure if you do not regard God's will in regard to it.

3. The God who showeth mercy has an hour by hour supervision of the struggle of human beings in this great world.

God is merciful at every point of the history of your life, if you will but see it and accept of it. I refer you to a well known fact in your game of curling, that the general interests of curling needs and has a supervision, and that each particular game of curling has that same supervision. Is not that so? Enlarge that idea of needed supervision until it takes in the human race, human history, the universe, all created intelligences, eternity, and you reach the almighty and all-

wise supervision of God. And the man who denies it, or contests it is like a near-sighted man who sees an object right at hand and accepts it, but unable to see a similar, though enlarged object further off, refuses to accept it. And that is a folly many men are guilty of.

But it shall not be so with curlers who are so deeply in love with their noble game as to accept all its symbology and its teachings. Shall we accept this morning anew and as never before God's supervision? And remembering the fact already discovered that God is a kindly God, shall we believe His supervision is a kindly supervision? And shall we see wrapped round the individual life that kindly supervision and accept its teachings and its guidance? And shall we enlarge our vision and see wrapped round the great human family that same kindly supervision and locate within its plan, favored America, favored England, struggling France, suffering Armenia, the cause of liberty in Russia slowly emerging into the light



of day, and all things, all things bitter and sweet, welcome and distasteful?

The theology that left out of its system an explanation of these untoward and forbidding things of life would indeed be a scrimped and narrow and cowardly theology. The charge could be maintained against it, that it did not dare to face the difficult problems that trouble the thoughts of men. Yes, all the while the man is willing and all the while the man is running God is shewing mercy. That kindly something that is over and above all human effort is in operation over every foot of life's stadium. Yes, all the while the man is willing and all the while the man is running, that kindly supervision is around and over the life, and the man is wise who looks to it and interrogates it. Believe it, oh, my brothers!

I look at your game of curling and I read your books upon curling—the carefully laid out rink, the well defined lines of the game, its rules and regulations, and as I have heretofore shown, these are suggestive, not only



of supervision, but of interjection of authoritative will in upon your plans.

I have seen a stone swept off the ice because it was poorly or carelessly played and in the way. And some men are like that poorly played stone. They are in the way. They are swept aside to make room and clean field for others. Someone has the right according to the rules of the game to order a stone off the ice, and you who acknowledge that right in your healthy game, must not deny it in the larger business of human life.

I have seen a game almost won, lost at last to the opposite side, by a wonderfully skillful play of the last stone; and while you take defeat with sad hearts, you cannot refuse a tribute of praise to your opponent's skill or luck, and would to God there were more of friendliness about defeat and victory in the weightiest interests of human life.

I have known a slip at the start throw a stone clear askew, but the player was not allowed to take it back.

I have known a crisis of the game, victory or defeat depending on a last stone, and it was thrown, but it did not do what was expected of it, but the player was not allowed to try again. In all our games and contests we make but little provision for a second chance, and no provision for retrieving mistakes.

When a stone is thrown, it is thrown; it must run its course, and that is the end of it. There is no *redemption* in curling. Neither is there in nature for that matter. The dead silence of nature upon the subject of redemption is appalling. All that we learn in nature is that things go on in rectilinear lines to their terminus. The boulder started down the incline goes to the bottom. The star falling from its sphere falls forever. The twig is bent, the tree is inclined. A wound in the tree is a scar for all the tree's life. There is no gospel in nature except for sinless beings.

We have then in curling no symbol that teaches redemption. There is no dispensation of grace; no undeserved favor towards

offenders, in curling! Where shall we go to find a truth most important, most necessary for faulty creatures, men who have made mistakes, have made slips and falls?

The poet, Dante, in his great poem, "Divina Commedia," descends into Hades, into Hell, and under the guidance of the beloved Beatrice enters the abode of the blessed, and is able, out of his exuberant imagination, to find analogy, picture, symbol, interpretation for all things in Heaven and in Earth; but at last he came to the cross of Jesus and Christ upon the cross, and the idea of God's mercy and grace and forgiving love was so high, so deep, so tender, that even his tremendous imagination failed to comprehend it, and he exclaims, with a glad sadness "And pattern fails me now."

I have reached a point in all our interpretation of your game, where I can find nothing to help me, to make vivid before you the more important truth of Christianity; aye, even the essential truth of Christianity, viz., the gospel of another chance, the gospel of

commencing over again in new and improved conditions, the gospel of retrieving of errors, the gospel of a forgiven past. And yet that is gospel that you and I need most to hear. Go back from your game of curling to your Bibles. The Bible alone contains the story of how God deals with men in the dispensation of grace.

The Bible teaches us the gospel of another chance. I believe that is good news to the world. How many of us wish that we could live our lives over again! How many of us looking back can see where we deflected from the true line! How many of us can put our fingers on the mistake whose consequences we suffer under even now.


Is there no forgiveness? Must we go right on forever on our deflected path? Is there no way of getting right with God and starting over again? Yes! by the grace of God, right now, this moment, any moment if a man will, he can get right with God, and put his life on the incline and graduate into glory.

The Bible gives us the story of the Potter and the clay, and that the Potter has the power to make one vessel to honor, and another to dishonor. But we also learn that he takes the marred vessel and makes it over again; makes of it the very best vessel he can. Oh! life marred, by what cause soever, by others fault, or your own folly; put yourself into the Potter's hand and He will make you a vessel fit for the palace of the King.

The Bible tells us the story of redeeming love. Presbyterians make much of the sovereignty of God. But many of them miss the point of the sovereignty. God declares again and again His sovereignty, for this purpose, that He has the right and the power to show mercy upon all, to inaugurate and carry out a dispensation of grace, and no one can stop His purpose or His plan. He has included us all under sin, that He might show mercy on all. We live in a dispensation of grace, undeserved favor shown only towards offenders. That truth is taught nowhere in the wide universe, but in the

Bible. It is revelation; Blessed be God for that revelation. Let us praise the Father for it, and accept Him whose life and sufferings made it possible, and the Holy Spirit who works it into our beings.

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